

Looked After Children Policy

Hermitage Primary School			
Review frequency	1 year	Reviewed	September 2021
Governing Committee Responsible	FGB	Governor Approval (date)	
Website	Yes		
Staff Responsible (Deputy Headteacher)	Parmjit Varaitch	Next Review	September 2022

Definition

Under the Children Act 1989, a child is looked after by a local authority if he or she is in their care or provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by the authority. They fall into four main groups:

- children who are accommodated under a voluntary agreement with their parents (section 20)
- children who are the subjects of a care order (section 31) or interim care order (section 38)
- children who are the subjects of emergency orders for their protection (sections 44 and 46)
- children who are compulsorily accommodated – this includes children remanded to the local authority or subject to a criminal justice supervision order with a residence requirement (section 21)

The term 'in care' refers only to children who are subject to a care order by the courts under section 31 of the Children Act 1989 - they may live with foster carers, in a Children's home, in a residential school, with relatives or with parents under supervision. Children who are cared for on a voluntary basis are 'accommodated' by the local authority under section 20 of the Children Act – they may live in foster care, in a Children's home or in a residential school. All these groups are said to be 'Looked After Children' - LAC. They may be looked after by our local authority or may be in the care of another authority but living in ours. LAC reviews, involving the school, will take place up until an adoption order has been granted. However Pupil Premium Plus funding will continue for LAC until they are 16 years old.

Rationale

Many children and young people who are in care have suffered abuse or neglect. Despite having as broad a range of abilities as their peers, Looked After Children are particularly

vulnerable to underachievement. Nationally, Looked After Children (LAC) significantly underachieve and are at greater risk of exclusion compared with their peers. Their academic and social progress is likely to be affected by their experiences, and compounded by instability in their personal circumstances. 75% of Looked After children leave education with no formal qualifications. Only 12% go on to further education compared with 68% of the general population. Helping LAC succeed and providing a better future for them is a key priority in our school.

Hermitage Primary School recognises that Looked After Children can experience specific and significant disadvantage within a school setting, and is committed to ensuring that they reach their potential in all areas. We are aware that Looked After Children may have specific difficulties in transport and attendance, doing homework, getting parental consent for activities, obtaining funding for extra activities, obtaining correct uniform and equipment, as well as stigma about their circumstances. We recognise that Looked After Children may have very specific needs and may be coping with trauma, abuse or rejection, and are likely to experience personal distress and uncertainty.

Hermitage Primary School believes that the educational experience of all children should be positive and powerful and aims to provide a learning environment in which every Looked After Child can be successful. We believe that this school has a major part to play in ensuring that LAC are able to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy, achieve, make a positive contribution to society and achieve economic wellbeing.

School Aims

This policy includes requirements set out in "Statutory guidance on the duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of children under section 52 of the Children Act 2004" and associated guidance on the education of Looked After Children.

Hermitage Primary School recognises that all pupils are entitled to a balanced, broad-based curriculum and aims to promote the educational achievement and welfare of pupils in public care. We will champion the needs of Looked After Children, raise awareness and challenge negative stereotypes about them, in order to ensure that they achieve to the highest level possible.

Our Key aims are:

1. To provide a safe and secure environment, where education is valued and there is a belief in the abilities and potential of all children
2. To support our looked after children and give them access to every opportunity to achieve to their potential, enjoy learning and take as full a part as possible in all school activities
3. To ensure that school policies and procedures are followed for LAC as for all children

4. To work with the Virtual School and ensure that carers and social workers of LAC pupils are kept fully informed of their child's progress and attainment
5. To fulfil our schools' role as corporate parents to promote and support the education of our Looked After Children, by asking the question, 'Would this be good enough for my child?'

Our school's approach to supporting the educational achievement of Looked After Children is based on the following principles:

- Prioritising education
- Promoting attendance
- Targeting support
- Having high expectations and raising aspiration
- Promoting inclusion
- Achieving stability and continuity
- Early intervention and priority action
- Promoting good communication between all those involved in the child's life
- Listening to children
- Promoting mental health and well-being
- Minimising exclusions and promoting stability
- Working in partnership with carers, social workers and other professionals

Roles and Responsibilities

Looked After Children may (or may not) have some or all of the following needs:

- low self esteem
- poor education standards due to time out of school
- delayed social/emotional/cognitive development
- be bullied or bully others
- be prone to mental health issues
- be isolated with few friends
- have behaviour needs
- poor attachments to others
- have a need to be very private

This makes them an extremely vulnerable group in terms of education and future life-chances. Hermitage Primary School is committed to ensuring that these children are supported as fully as possible and will ensure that the following are in place, and are working effectively:

- a Designated Teacher for Looked After Children
- Personal Education Plans for all Looked After Children
- all staff have a clear understanding of confidentiality and issues that affect looked after children
- effective strategies that supports the education of this vulnerable group

Responsibility of the Governing Body

Ensure that all Governors are fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance on the education of Looked After Children:

- The Education (Admission of Looked After Children England) Regulations 2006. Relevant DfE guidance to Governing Bodies (Supporting Looked After Learners: A Practical Guide for School Governors)
- Ensure that the school has an overview of the needs and progress of Looked After Children
- Allocate resources to meet the needs of Looked After Children
- Ensure the school's other policies and procedures support their needs
- Ensure that the school has a Designated Teacher, and that the Designated Teacher is enabled to carry out his or her responsibilities as below
- Support the Head teacher, the Designated Teacher and other staff in ensuring that the needs of Looked After Children are recognised and met

Receive a termly report setting out:

1. The number of looked-after pupils on the school's roll (if any)
2. Their attendance, as a discrete group, compared to other pupils
3. Their attainment, as a discrete group, compared to other pupils
4. The number of fixed term and permanent exclusions (if any)
5. The destinations of pupils who leave the school
6. The information for this report should be collected and reported in ways that preserve the anonymity and respect the confidentiality of the pupils concerned

The designated Governor for Looked After Children is **Mary Sergides**

Responsibility of the Head Teacher

- Identify a Designated Teacher for Looked After Children, whose role is set out below. The designated teacher is **Mrs Parmjit Varaitch**
- It is essential that another appropriate person is identified quickly should the Designated Teacher leave the school or take sick leave
- Ensure that procedures are in place to monitor the admission, progress, attendance and any exclusion of Looked After Children and take action where progress, conduct or attendance is below expectations
- Report on the progress, attendance and conduct of Looked After Children to all parties involved
- Ensure that staff in school receive relevant training and are aware of their responsibilities under this policy and related guidance.

Responsibility of the Designated Teacher

The role became statutory in September 2009 under the Children and Young Persons' Act 2008 (the 2008 Act). The designated teacher must be a qualified teacher and should be a

senior member of staff who has enough status and experience to advise and provide training to school staff on issues relating to LAC. They need to be able to influence decisions about the teaching and learning of these children.

Responsibilities include:

- Knowing who all the LAC are in school and ensuring that availability of all relevant details from school record-keeping systems as required
- Attending relevant training about LAC and acting as the key liaison professional for other agencies and carers in relation to LAC
- Promoting a culture of high expectations and aspirations for how LAC should learn
- Helping school staff understand the issues that affect the learning of LAC such as differentiated teaching strategies appropriate for individual children and in making accurate assessments of progress
- Making sure that LAC are prioritised in one-to-one tuition arrangements and that carers understand the importance of supporting learning at home
- Removing the barriers to learning for LAC
- Ensuring any LAC new to the school are welcomed positively and assessed when they start at the school to identify strengths and weaknesses in their learning. This will be used to inform planning and teaching
- Developing personalised learning packages for LAC in conjunction with the relevant teaching staff
- Ensuring that the LAC in their school have a voice in setting learning targets for themselves
- Championing for LAC
- Leading on developing and implementing the PEP within the school. The social worker is responsible for initiating the PEP process
- Monitoring the child's progress against the targets on the PEP and extending these targets if they have been achieved
- Ensuring the child makes a smooth transition to the new school and that the child's records are transferred without delay
- Liaising with the Virtual School in all aspects of the LAC progress and support
- Convening urgent multi-agency meetings if a LAC is experiencing difficulties or is at risk of exclusion
- Arranging for a mentor or key worker to whom the young person can talk to. Arranging for the LAC to be supported by its peers
- Producing at least one annual report* to the governing body which should include: current progress, attendance and exclusions (if any), any concerns regarding behaviour, how the PEP has been implemented and whether the actions put in place are effective in addressing the learning needs of LAC, how the Designated Teacher works in partnership with the LA, training undertaken for carrying out the role effectively. The report must not mention the children's names for confidentiality reasons

- Promoting good home-school links and the importance of education as a way of improving life chances for LAC
- Be pro-active in supporting transition and planning when moving to a new phase in education
- Be aware that 60% of Looked After Children say they are bullied, so will actively monitor and prevent bullying in school by raising awareness through the school's anti-bullying policy
- Ensure that attendance is monitored

Responsibility of all Staff

- Have high aspirations for the educational and personal achievement of Looked After Children, as for all pupils
- Maintain Looked After Children's confidentiality and ensure they are supported sensitively
- Respond promptly to the Designated Teacher's requests for information
- Work to enable Looked After Children to achieve stability and success within school
- Promote the self-esteem of all Looked After Children
- Have an understanding of the key issues that affect the learning of Looked After Children
- Be aware that 60% of Looked After Children say they are bullied so work to prevent bullying in line with the School's policy

Confidentiality

Information on Looked After Children will be shared with school staff on a "need to know" basis. The Designated Teacher will discuss what information is shared with which school staff at the PEP meeting. Once this has been agreed with the social worker, carer, young person, and other parties, complete confidentiality is to be maintained.

Record keeping and information sharing

The Designated Teacher will keep an up-to-date record of Looked After Children and Young People in school and will ensure that relevant information is made known to appropriate staff.

A Personal Education Plan will be initiated by school/virtual LAC Team within 20 school days of the Looked After Child or Young Person starting at the school or being taken into care and will be reviewed regularly and as necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the LAC/YP. The PEP will provide a regular opportunity to review progress amongst professionals, note any concerns and ensure that all relevant parties are informed accordingly.

Copies of reports and appropriate documentation will be sent to authorised carers and agencies involved with the child as well as any receiving school at point of transition.

It is vital that the Looked After Child or Young Person is aware of information being recorded, in what circumstances and who will have access to it. How this is shared with them will depend on their age and level of understanding.

Exclusions

Hermitage Primary School recognises that Looked After Children are particularly vulnerable to exclusions. Where a LAC is at risk of exclusion the school will try every practicable means to maintain the child in school. A multi-professional meeting will be arranged, bringing together all those involved with the young person to discuss strategies to minimise the risk of exclusion.

The child or young person's Personal Education Plan will reflect strategies to support the child and where relevant those employed in the Pastoral Support Plan. All relevant measures and resources will be considered to provide support and provide alternative educational packages to prevent an exclusion from happening.

Please refer to the school's Behaviour Policy for more information.

Staff Development and Training

Arrangements will be made to ensure that the Designated Teacher is kept up to date with developments relating to the education and attainment of Looked After Children.

Other staff will receive relevant training and support to enable them to work sympathetically and productively with Looked After Children, including those who are underachieving or at risk of underachieving or who have additional needs. These may include EAL, being Gifted and Talented or having learning or physical needs.

Teachers with responsibility for Special Educational Needs provision and for children who are Gifted and Talented will be informed of those Looked After Children who have particular gifts, talents or learning needs and will work with them appropriately.

Home-School Liaison

The school recognises the value of a close working relationship between home and school and will work towards developing a strong partnership with parents/guardians and care workers to enable Looked After Children to achieve their potential. Open evenings as well as PEP and Care Plan review meetings provide opportunities to continue to develop this partnership working.

Admission Arrangements

We recognise that due to care arrangements LAC may enter school mid-term and that it is important that they are given a positive welcome and where appropriate additional support and pre-entry visits to help them settle. The school recognises that Looked After children are an 'excepted group' and will prioritise Looked After Children in the school's oversubscription criteria following the DfE Admissions Code (Admissions of Looked After Children (England) Regulations 2006).

Links with other Agencies

The school recognises the value of working together with other agencies and organisations and will work closely with colleagues from services involved with the Looked After Child or Young Person including Social Care teams; Educational Psychologist; Health Services, CAMHS; Youth Offending Teams; Axis.

Race, Equality and Equal Opportunities Statement

All children have equal access and inclusive rights to the curriculum regardless of their gender, race, disability or ability. We plan work that is differentiated for the performance of all groups and individuals. We are committed to creating a positive climate that will enable everyone to work free from racial intimidation and harassment and to achieve their full potential.